



# The Conservation Strip

## John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District

### 2019 Annual Awards Luncheon

The John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District held its annual Awards Luncheon on November 13, at the John Barton Payne Building in Warrenton. Local citizens were recognized for their outstanding commitment to conservation throughout Fauquier County. This year's distinguished guests included Delegate Michael Webert (VA-18) and Fauquier County Supervisor Mary Leigh McDaniel (Marshall District).

The following awards were presented to members of the community:

The **Edwin Gulick Conservation Educator Award** was presented to **O.B. Messick & Sons**. The Messicks began hosting Conservation Field Days for students of Fauquier County starting in 1995. Since then, they have hosted a total of 29 field day events with students from 3 middle schools, 2 elementary schools, 2 private schools, and various home school groups. These conservation field days introduce students to agriculture and natural resource conservation. Students rotate around to different stations which may include Dairy Operations, Farm Management, Insects, Forestry, Water/Watersheds, Nutrient Management, Soils, and Composting. Over the past 24 years, the Messicks have welcomed 5,255 students, teachers, and chaperones to their farm, providing important education in agriculture, natural resources, and conservation.

The **Conservation Partner Award** was awarded to the Virginia Department of Forestry – Rappahannock Work Area. Area foresters serve as technical service providers to the full slate of forestry practices in the Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share Program (administered by JMSWCD) and NRCS Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program practices. The Rappahannock area team is also a key partner for riparian buffer plantings that are installed after stream exclusion practices, including those conducted with community organizations and area schools. In the past seven years, the area team has assisted JMSWCD and over 1,000 volunteers with planting 65.8 acres of riparian buffer. Foresters also complete planting plans, store seedlings and other supplies, provide planting instruction and logistical support during community planting events. The forestry team also assists with JMSWCD Conservation Field Days and reach about 750 students per year just in their work with JMSWCD.

**Virginia Farms LLC** was awarded this year's **Conservation Farm Award**. Virginia Farms, located just west of the village of Delaplane is a 1,200 acre farm with about 400 head of cattle. Over the last 10 years, the Chester Family, in partnership with their tenant farmer Virginia Beef Corp., has completed four separate grazing land protection practices which in total have protected over 25,600 linear feet (4.8

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### Winter 2020

#### Mission Statement

Our Mission is to provide leadership, technical assistance, information, and education to the citizens of Fauquier County in proper soil stewardship, agricultural conservation methods, and water quality protection so as to ensure the wise use of the county's natural resources.



#### In This Issue

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- ◆ **New Year's Resolutions**

# Stop! and Look Around

*by Roger Flint, Conservation Specialist*

Do you have a farm with unproductive acreage going to waste? The John Marshall Soil Water Conservation District has a conservation program that can help improve those acres. Look around the next time you drive down the road, you might see acres that are barren due to soil disturbances, deforestation, or simply fields growing up in weeds. The State of Virginia is providing financial and technical assistance through the JMSWCD. This program is called Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) which can provide a recipe of conservation practices to protect and enhance these fields while restoring water quality to our local streams, and rivers.

A conservation recipe can be drawn up with the assistance from the JMSWCD's Specialists to help alleviate, and heal the land sores. Conservation practices may include Nutrient Management planning, and writing. This recipe becomes a guideline or plan for the application of nutri-

ents such as lime, and fertilizer. These are expensive ingredients, and not to be wasted. Over fertilization can be as detrimental to the soil, costs, and pollution as under applications. The plan provides for their management and not waste. Agriculture personnel once called manure, "animal waste" now we call it nutrient management, because it is important for soil health and plants. This plan can be first step in the conservation recipe to heal the land. The District's VACS program can help with the cost of writing such a plan for your farm; however, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Division Soil and Water Conservation can provide free assistance in writing a plan by the their technical staff.

Many pastured acres in the county are setback by the overgrazing of livestock. A nutrient management plan would be helpful, but a grazing land management plan would also improve the quantity, quality, and utilization of forage. This plan will help reduce sediments, nutrients, and pathogen loads in stormwater runoff while improving soil health. It would include a pasture conditioning score which is an evaluation of the forages by type and quality. The plan includes forage grazing heights, and stocking rates based on numbers and size of animals. The JMSWCD has both technical & financial assistance for this Grazing Land Management (SL-10) practice to help improve unproductive acreage. Just one more step in the conservation recipe.

If interested in applying for any of these practices, contact the JMSWCD at: 98 Alexandria Pike, Suite 31, Warrenton, VA 20186, phone: 540-347-3120 x3, or email: [roger.flint@fauquiercounty.gov](mailto:roger.flint@fauquiercounty.gov).



*Grazing Management can be just one ingredient in your conservation recipe.*

## New Year's Resolutions

*by Melissa Allen, Conservation Specialist*

Season's Greetings! Yes, it's that time of the year. Christmas has come and gone. The passing of Christmas ushers in another holiday – New Year's Day. This holiday brings in the tradition of making resolutions (insert eye roll). Have you thought about your resolutions for 2020? Do you remember your resolutions from 2019? Better yet, did you manage to keep your resolutions from 2019?

Maybe it was to kick a bad habit such as rather loudly sighing every time you take a sip of soda – so annoying to your neighboring coworkers. Maybe it was to eat healthier, to exercise more, or to lose weight. Nevertheless, let's forget the boring, hard-to-keep resolutions of last year and make an environmentally friendly resolution for 2020.

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# 2018 Annual Awards Luncheon (continued)...

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miles) of streambank in the Goose Creek Watershed. These efforts have created more than 120 acres of riparian buffer. There are plans in the works to complete a practice in FY2020 and another in FY2021 on 485 acres of pasture. Once constructed, these practices will protect an additional 20,000 feet (3.8 miles) of streambank and create an additional 53 acres of riparian buffer. With the completion of the FY2020 and FY2021 practices this will constitute one of the largest individual livestock stream exclusion efforts completed in the Fauquier County portion of the Goose Creek Watershed.

This year's **Clean Water Farm Award** was presented to **Ann Backer & Smitten Farm**. Smitten Farm, located in The Plains, is comprised of two 800-ac farms, Smitten Farm and Salem Farm. Once a traditional row crop farm, the farm has transitioned mainly to a permanent grass operation for hay and straw with very little acreage in row crops today. Their conservation ethic began when Mr. Backer witnessed the area becoming more and more developed. He saw a need not only for open space, but contiguous open space. Conservation practices implemented on the farm include nutrient management, cover crops,

long-term vegetative cover on cropland, continuous no-till, precision ag, prescribed grazing, and forested buffers (of which there are more than 170 acres). Animals are excluded from all but 10% of streams. The remaining area is being addressed through current conservation planning efforts. Horse manure is traded to local mushroom producers and used in the growing process. The mushroom compost returns the farm to be used in poor production areas.

A **Special Recognition Letter** was presented to Sarah Costella and Alexandra Avery of the Farm Service Agency for their outstanding efforts with their consistently prompt, professional assistance in initiating the conservation planning process with accurate farm maps, as well as their ongoing promotion of programs and services that benefit the agricultural community. Their willingness to readily assist the District helps ensure schedules are met. The information provided is critical to generating accurate watershed location information and avoiding the duplication of services.

Congratulations to all of this year's award winners!



*The John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District award winners. From left to right: Sarah Costella & Alex Avery (Farm Service Agency), Sarah Parmelee & Kyle Dingus (Virginia Department of Forestry), Gene Doody, Hunter Marek, & Susan Dunham (Smitten Farm). Not Pictured: O.B. Messick & Sons, Virginia Farms LLC*



## John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District

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Hours: 7:30 am-4:30 pm  
Monday-Friday

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District Conservationist  
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# New Year's Resolutions (continued)...

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Last year, I chose to use less non-reusable plastic containers in my kitchen. I recycled most of my Tupperware containers and started using glass containers – I may or may not have a tiny collection of vintage Pyrex containers. For 2020, I want to find another way to be more environmentally friendly in the kitchen. After much thought (way too much), I chose to make my own Beeswax Wraps. I plan to use these wraps in our day to day food prep instead of Saran wrap and sandwich bags. Fingers crossed – this may prove more difficult while packing lunches for 10 and 7-year old daughters.

After researching, I found a recipe for *The BEST Reusable Beeswax Wrap Recipe*. Directions can be found at: <https://blog.mountainroseherbs.com/the-complete-guide-to-diy-beeswax-wraps-including-a-beeless-vegan-food-wrap>. To make these 2-3 of these wraps you will

need cotton fabric (12"x12" pieces), pine resin, beeswax pastilles, jojoba oil, a popsicle stick, parchment paper, and a paint brush. The website even has a recipe for a *Beeless Vegan Food Wrap* if that's your thing. Selecting the fabric was by far my favorite part of this project – so many choices! Stay tuned for the finished product!



## Calendar of Events

January 1		John Marshall SWCD Office Closed	
January 8	4:00 PM	John Marshall SWCD Board Meeting	JMSWCD Office
January 17		John Marshall SWCD Office Closed	
January 20		John Marshall SWCD Office Closed	
February 12	4:00 PM	John Marshall SWCD Board Meeting	JMSWCD Office
February 17		John Marshall SWCD Office Closed	
March 11	4:00 PM	John Marshall SWCD Board Meeting	JMSWCD Office

**Staying Connected:** The John Marshall SWCD makes it easy to stay connected through social media. If you're on Facebook, "Like" our page to get updates on what's happening at the District.



The Conservation Strip is a quarterly publication of the John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District. To be added to our email list, please send an email to Wendy Merwin at: [wendy.merwin@fauquiercounty.gov](mailto:wendy.merwin@fauquiercounty.gov).

All programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status.